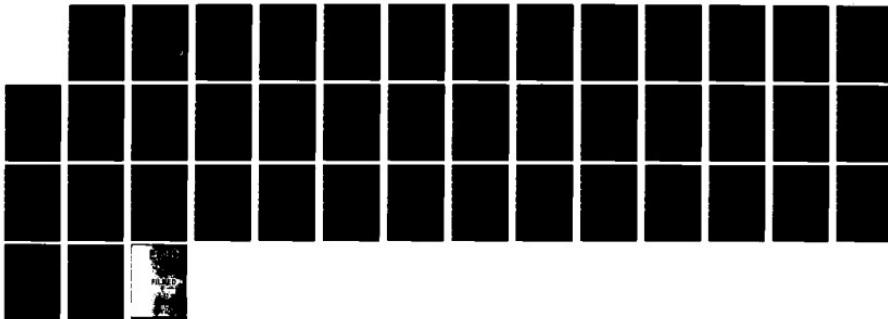
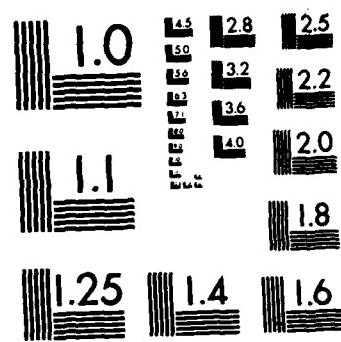


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Methodological Contributions of Person Perception to Performance Appraisal<sup>1</sup>

Daniel R. Ilgen and Janet L. Favero

Purdue University

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### Abstract

A process focus on performance appraisal represents the application of knowledge about the information processing capabilities of individuals to the problem of appraising the work performance of employees. Much of our attempt to understand the appraisal process has borrowed from social psychology in general and person perception in particular. Although the theoretical constructs of person perception have appeared to be very relevant to performance appraisal, the experimental methods from which the data related to the theoretical constructs have been generated may be less well suited for studying particular issues in performance appraisal. In this paper, we outline several of the methods used in person perception and then discuss the relevance of these methods for studying performance appraisal. In order to accomplish this final critique of the methods, we first outline the nature of the performance appraisal process with its conditions and constraints that affect the relevance of data collected with respect to the process.

## Methodological Contributions of Person Perception to Performance Appraisal

In the late 1970s, when frustration with the inability of performance appraisal systems to provide valid ratings peaked, there was a rush to abandon the old and look for new solutions to old dilemmas. Perhaps this frustration was brought on by the realization that what many of us thought was the ultimate in performance appraisal--the Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale (Smith & Kendall, 1963)--was really not as superior to other methods as we once believed (See, Bernardin & Smith, 1982; Schwab & Heneman, 1975). Regardless of the source, there was and still is a turning away from the old represented by concentration upon rating errors as criteria and rating scale formats as ways to deal with the criteria. In search of a different and hopefully more fruitful direction for research, the criterion has shifted to rater accuracy. The work of Borman (1977; 1979; 1983) has been particularly important with respect to accuracy. Attempts to understand rater accuracy have borrowed heavily from the works of social psychologists (See Ilgen & Feldman, 1983). Clearly the constructs and theoretical frameworks offered by social psychologists interested in the perception of others, person perception, offered some valuable insights into the way raters rate others when appraising their performance.

In spite of our general acceptance of the "process approach" to performance appraisal (the label that has become associated with the new focus on performance appraisal), we

wish to interject some caution. It must be kept in mind that the constructs and theoretical propositions borrowed from person perception and applied to performance appraisal are still only reasonable, and, we would add, interesting hypotheses. They are not, however, empirically demonstrated phenomena in the appraisal context. To borrow from other disciplines is a perfectly reasonable and valuable source of ideas, particularly in the early stages of investigation of a new topic area or a new construal of an old one. Nevertheless, one must be wary of adapting propositions from research with a different perspective and then accepting the validity of these propositions on the basis of little more than an intuitive judgment that the problems seem similar.

It is our belief that research and constructs from the person perception literature have much to offer those of us concerned about performance appraisal but that many of us have been far too uncritical in mapping constructs from it to performance appraisal. Therefore, our purpose today is to suggest what we feel are the strengths and weaknesses of the methods applied in person perception research with respect to the needs of performance appraisal. To do this, we shall first briefly describe the performance appraisal setting. Next we shall list what we feel are the general areas in person perception that appear to have the greatest potential for contribution to the understanding of the appraisal process. Finally we shall look at the methods used for research in these areas and discuss those methods that should be most valuable to us, those that are likely to be least valuable (and perhaps

lead us astray), and those that need certain modifications in order to yield information useful to our purpose.

#### The Appraisal Problem

In almost all cases, the performance appraisal process involves the interaction of an appraiser and an appraisee in a work setting. This interaction is followed by a judgment process in which the appraiser uses data he or she has available on the appraisee to make some evaluation about performance-related attributes of the appraisee. We illustrate this process in the very simplified schematic of Figure 1.

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Insert Figure 1 about here  
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The first set of attributes in the appraisal process are those that we typically label individual differences. They refer to those personal characteristics possessed by the appraisee. This individual then interacts with characteristics of the work setting to produce two overlapping sets of data to be used by the appraiser. One of these sets is the actual behaviors that the individual displays on the job; the other is the products, outcomes, or consequences of the behaviors. It is some mix or combination of elements from these two overlapping sets that serve as the data or inputs into the performance appraisal judgments to be made by the appraiser. Therefore, it is extremely important that we recognize three features of behaviors and products. First, the behaviors represent an interaction between characteristics of the person and of the environment that is, in many or most cases,

impossible to untangle at least from the observation of a given individual in a particular setting. For example, if you are observing the typing behavior of a person in terms of words per minute corrected by the number of errors, these behaviors will be much different for a manual typewriter as compared to a word processor. The second important consideration is that the behaviors and those things that result from them--products, outcomes, and/or consequences--are so closely associated temporally and by their very nature that the appraiser often cannot distinguish between them. For example, for service types of positions, how does one separate prompt or timely service (a product) from the behaviors that product it? Perhaps one can argue for some relatively distinct elements in these two sets, but even so, we doubt that appraisers can keep them separate. Finally note that the products or outcomes are influenced not only by the behaviors but also by the work environment. Thus, the promptness or timeliness of the service at a fast food restaurant is a function of the quality of the food preparation equipment and the layout of the workspace as well as of the efficiency of the employee.

The conditions mentioned thus far only create the necessary conditions for appraisal. Appraisal takes place when the appraiser receives the information, processes it, and forms a judgment about the conditions that were observed. This judgment is an evaluation(s) of the individual according to dimensions considered important at work, and/or makes judgments about personal traits or other characteristics of the appraisee. Regardless of the elements that are judged or

evaluated, the appraiser uses perceptions of what it is felt are important to map some judgments or evaluations onto the appraisee.

Performance appraisal, in the past, has addressed almost exclusively the link between appraiser behavior and appraisee and made inferences about conditions that exist in one or some combination of the two sets of behaviors and outcomes. Some attention has been paid to the extent to which the judgments obtained from the appraiser were veridical with behaviors and also person characteristics. However, for the most part, the inferences about veridicality were difficult to substantiate.

#### Contributions of Person-Perception

The potential contributions of person-perception to performance appraisal lies in the extent to which it adds detail to regions in the diagram of Figure 1 that industrial-organizational psychologists interested in performance appraisal have tended to ignore. This detail tends to be focused in the cognitive processing capabilities and limitations of the appraiser as he or she deals with social stimuli. For the most part, what goes on within the appraiser in the appraisal process tended to be treated as a "black box" phenomenon by industrial-organizational psychologists. They recognized the importance of the appraiser's processing of information but tended to ignore it by focusing on elimination of rating errors through scale construction--a rather weak and indirect way of dealing with the symptoms of judgment rather than the process itself. Person perception deals with the

process itself.

While filling a void in the performance appraisal perspective, the exclusive process focus of person perception has also limited its applicability to the topic. This is due to the fact that many of the experimental paradigms and procedures, the constructs or variables, and the subject populations on which the research was conducted have limited generalizability with respect to performance appraisal. The limitations affect both the extent to which we can draw inferences about the phenomena of interest and the extent to which we can borrow the methods and procedures of person perception in order to better understand performance appraisal.

In particular, the person perception literature, by focusing on the process of perceiving others without the concerns of performance appraisal in mind, has either downplayed or ignored at least three critical features of performance appraisal. The first of these is the failure to distinguish between behaviors and the consequences of those behaviors. We made this distinction in Figure 1 but pointed out that the appraiser is faced with a combination of both of these data. Most of the time, the appraiser really cannot distinguish between these in real world settings. As a result, performance appraisal must deal with both types of inputs into the appraisal process. A good example of the effects of consequences is the work of Wood (1979). He found that nurses made very different evaluations about the behavior of, for example, leaving the bed rail down on the bed of a very ill patient, depending upon whether or not the patient falls out of

bed. If only behaviors went into evaluations, these two situations should receive the same evaluations. Research on person perception has ignored some of the characteristics of appraisals such as consequences and the value of the outcomes of behaviors to the organization's goals.

A second important omission in the person perception literature is the effect of past and future interaction between appraiser and appraisee. The performance appraisal task is one that usually provides the appraiser with information about the person over an extended period of time. More importantly, once the appraisal takes place, the appraiser's judgment is usually communicated, either directly or indirectly, to the appraisee. Therefore, the appraiser is likely to be influenced in the judgment by the impact that his or her appraisal will have on the further interaction between himself or herself and the appraisee. Again, person perception research, in general, ignores this past-future interaction dimension.

Finally, research on person perception rarely deals with the common performance appraisal condition of interdependency between the appraiser and the appraisee (Ilgen & Feldman, 1983). Since most appraisals are done by the appraisee's immediate supervisor, the performance of the appraisee often has implications for the appraiser's own evaluation. How well a work group performs is very important for the evaluation of a foreman, supervisor, or manager in charge of that work group. Therefore, the evaluation given by an appraiser in this type of situation may reflect a desire to enhance his or her own

performance as much as to judge the appraisee's.

We shall now turn our attention to three major topic areas within person perception. These are Attribution Theory, Implicit Personality Theory (IPT), and Social Cognition. For each of these, we shall very briefly mention the major tenets of the position and then move to a description and an evaluation of the research methods used in each discussing how these methods are or are not compatible with our needs to understand performance appraisal. We shall also consider how some methods might be adopted to fit our needs when this seems appropriate.

#### Specific Theories

##### Attribution Theory

Attribution theory is based on the notion that an observer interprets behavior in terms of its causes. These causal interpretations, in turn, affect reactions to the behaviors in question. The general model identifies (a) antecedents that determine an observer's attributions (b) attributions, or cognitive mediation processes, and (c) consequences of attributions (Kelley & Mischel, 1979).

The primary attributional task of the observer is to categorize the causes of actor behavior into three major source dimensions: person, entity, and context. In theory, the observer arrives at this attribution by applying a principle of covariation between potential causes and effects; the perceived cause is found among the conditions varying with the occurrence of the event rather than among those that are unchanging (Green & Mitchell, 1979).

The attribution of a given observer's response to a specific actor at a particular time depends on the perception of three conditions--(1) the degree of its consensus with other observers' responses to the actor, (2) the consistency between the present behavior and past behaviors under the same conditions, and (3) the extent to which the specific response is distinctive from the person's responses to other actors.

Two major foci exist within the attribution literature. The first concerns the antecedents-attribution link; factors thought to affect attributions are manipulated, and attributions are measured. The second concern is with the attribution-consequence link. Here antecedents are manipulated to produce specific attributions at either end of the specified dimensions, and consequences are measured. We shall briefly consider the research from each of these two perspectives in terms of contributions to our knowledge about performance appraisal. In particular, we shall describe the typical paradigm of the research, some interesting variations on the paradigm, and the conditions that are lacking in the research with respect to meeting the needs of those of us interested in understanding performance appraisal.

#### Antecedent-Attribution Links

The typical research on the antecedents of attributions manipulates factors that may affect the attributions. The manipulated variables generally can be classified into two sets--those dealing with information that influences the beliefs of the observer and those that affect observer

motivation. By far the most prevalent procedure is some variation of the "paper people" paradigm. Subjects, primarily college students, are presented with packets of information about the person's performance on the task of interest and additional information on which attributions about why the person performed as indicated could be derived. In a similar fashion the motivation of the observer is manipulated by emphasizing the importance of various aspects of the attribution.

It should be immediately apparent, that although the notion of the antecedents of performance attributions is extremely relevant to performance appraisal in organizations, the external validity of the paradigm for research most frequently used to generate the knowledge base is extremely weak. In terms of our three conditions for relevance to performance appraisal mentioned earlier--the need to incorporate time (both past and future), the need to consider the consequences of behavior, and the need to accept the fact that appraisers are often dependent upon the performance of their subordinates--only the time dimension receives any consideration and even here it is almost exclusively that of the past and not the future. Furthermore, the extent to which paper people data generalizes to real people is very weak. Therefore, the conclusions one draws with respect to performance appraisal can only be tentative ones in need of replication when the standard paradigm is used.

The variations on the basic paradigm that are most relevant to research on performance appraisal are those that

incorporate some interactions with other individuals rather than paper stimulus persons. Kelly and Mischel (1979) cited studies where the salience of cues for persons about whom performance attributions were to be made was manipulated by variations in the seating arrangement between actor and observer, increasing the amount of illumination on the actor, and varying the race or sex of the group. Jones, Rock, Shaver, Goethals, and Ward (1968) used confederates who displayed patterns of performance that were either ascending or descending so the observer was able to see the performance pattern rather than be told about it. This research is particularly relevant because it allows for both a time dimension--performance over trials--and for actual observation of behavior. A weaker but still beneficial variation on this technique is the use of video tapes to observe performance such as Borman (1978) has done. The latter has not provided the time dimension by presenting video stimuli over trials, but such a procedure is certainly possible with videotaped stimuli. In fact, DeNisi (Reference Note 1) and his colleagues are doing just that in their research on attributions in performance appraisal. Their work is just beginning but deserves careful attention.

A final example is the work of Bersheid, Granziano, Monson, and Dermer (1976) that combined the more realistic conditions of interpersonal interaction with video taping. In this case, subjects were allowed to overhear the interactions among three actors. While listening, they heard all sides of

the arguments that each of the three were presenting. The subject then chose which of the three actors he or she would watch on a videotape at any one time. The accuracy with which the observer was able to show with respect to the positions taken by actors served as the department variable which was investigated as a function of the observational strategies used by observers.

In conclusion, the research methods concerning the antecedent-attribution link of attribution theory offer more in terms of promise than of products now available. Clearly the paper people paradigm is unacceptable. On the other hand, procedures that incorporate the actual observation of performers, preferable directly and perhaps through video taped vignettes, is promising. Although research to date using these methods has usually omitted sequential time conditions and always ignored the notion of the interdependency between observer and actor, these factors can and should be built into future research on the formation of attributions relevant to performance appraisal.

#### Attribution-Consequence Link

Consequences of hypothesized attributions include behavior, affect and expectancy. Researchers interested in the dynamics of behavior have focused on the attributions-consequences link. As an intervening cognitive factor, attributions cannot be manipulated directly, so research on consequences almost always involves manipulation of perceived causes (antecedents) and measurement of their effects on dependent measures of behavior, affect and expectancy. Because

the hypothesized mediating attributions usually go unmeasured, there is often ambiguity as to the exact attribution involved or even whether or not attributions are the mediators at all. Further, failures of these studies are ambiguous with respect to the causal links of antecedent-attributions or attribution-consequences; either link or both may underlie failure to obtain expected consequences (Kelley & Mischel, 1979).

In general, research on this link also tends to rely heavily upon paper people. On the other hand, since one of the major dependent variables is that of behavior toward the person observed, there is a stronger tendency to use actual interactions between actors and observers. For example, Strickland (1958) had subjects maintain close supervision over a worker and found a decrease in the supervisor's trust for the worker.

Another improvement in research on the attribution-consequence link is the tendency to use as subjects people who are actually on a job and very familiar with the nature of the work described. The work of Wood, Mitchell, and their colleagues exemplifies this (Mitchell, Green, & Wood, 1981; Mitchell & Kalb, 1981; Wood, 1980). In this case, nurses are given descriptions of typical behaviors of other nurses with or without consequence information. They observed that prescribed punishments (or rewards) as well as judgments about the severity of the behaviors are influenced by the consequences.

With respect to the three dimensions of time, behavior

consequences, and interdependency that we have been stressing as necessary conditions for understanding performance appraisal, the antecedent-consequence link research addresses most directly the dimension of consequences. However, the research procedures used seem reasonable but not particularly innovative for dealing with these problems. We feel future research must deal with actual conditions either in the field or in more controlled settings in order to place more confidence in the findings to date. Furthermore, more work must be done to build in the time dimension and interdependency. In this case, the paradigm being used could build in time quite easily but interdependency would almost certainly require actual interaction between the observer and the observed.

#### Implicit Personality Theory

Implicit Personality Theory (IPT) is concerned with persons' perceptions of relations between traits, or how traits covary in others (Schneider, 1973). With respect to performance appraisal issues, the concern has been with rating errors. Two errors based upon IPT are systematic distortion and halo. Systematic distortion refers to distortions in correlations between dimensions in the direction of semantic relations between those dimensions (Borman, 1981). Cooper (1981) described the distortion process as one in which observations were recalled, rating errors were not random but were "systematically in the direction of a pre-existing conceptual scheme" (p. 303). Evidence for systematic distortion is based upon demonstrations of a high

correspondence between rated behavior (memory based) behavior matrices and semantic similarity relational matrices, and the absence of correspondance between rated behavior and actual behavior matrices (Block, Weiss, & Thorne, 1979). Halo, is defined as a higher degree of correlation among all traits than is justified from their actual intercorrelations.

The general research paradigm used is centered on the development of a correlation matrix of traits. Some studies have "direct" generation of the trait matrix where subjects are asked to assess directly the relations among traits. For example, subjects might be asked to rate the similarity of a pair of traits or the likelihood that they covary. Cause-effect inferences may be gained by presenting two traits and asking the subjects, "If the stimulus person were to change from possessing the first to possessing the second, what other traits would change?" (Schneider, 1973). In other studies more directly related to performance appraisal, subjects are asked to rate stimulus persons on pre-specified traits. The stimulus persons might vary on some dimension such as race or sex. With this method, a mean score is computed for each subject on each trait, a product-moment correlation is computed across subjects for all pairs of traits. Then a Factor or Cluster Analysis is used to reduce the matrix of trait intercorrelations and to represent the structure of the IPT or the "actual" individual. Most studies have provided subjects with both stimulus objects and traits.

A key problem with these methods is that factor structure

might vary greatly as a function of stimulus objects and traits (Schneider, 1973). As Block, et al. (1979) stated, "It is now well recognized that by varying the mix of variables included in clustering analysis, one can alter fundamentally both the number and the nature of the summarizing dimensions thus obtained" (p. 1056). Furthermore, Schneider (1973) noted that the selection of traits and stimulus person characteristics is often arbitrary and the results may be biased when the subject is forced to use categories provided by the experimenter.

Another major weakness of the method of IPT is that much of the research again relies upon paper people. Hamilton (1981) recently noted that trait words, when used as stimulus materials in questionnaire-like materials, do not have the ambiguity of meaning or the potential for alternative interpretation characteristic of many real life encounters with persons in a person perception context.

The major contribution of the IPT research is its emphasis on accuracy. The work of Borman (1975; 1978; 1979) is an excellent example of the contribution made by accuracy criteria. His work and that of Bernardin and Pence (1980) clearly show that reductions in the presence of typical rater errors of halo, leniency, and central tendency do not necessarily indicate greater accuracy.

Although some of the work on accuracy has used paper people, there has been an encouraging move toward the use of video tapes which should provide the rater with more realistic stimuli for appraisal. Borman (1978) was instrumental in developing such procedures, and the tapes that he developed

have been very useful for such research. At this point, however, there is definitely a need to replicate findings on other video stimuli besides Borman's.

Borman (1981) recently has suggested that objective standards could be developed to serve as "true scores" in appraisal settings by sampling behaviors of actual work groups and then video taping these behaviors. From such video tapes, correlational matrices would provide a basis for "gaining a glimpse of the actual structure of work behavior on some job to see how closely it comes to the structure inferred from performance ratings" (p. 23).

Unlike attributional research, IPT research neither ignores the effects of time, consequences, or interdependency on ratings (the three factors we held as essential) nor investigates their effects. Whereas attribution theory tended to hold these three constant by their absense, the effects of the three are present but allowed to vary freely in most of the IPT research. This is especially true with the research that uses field samples such as those that have compared the factor structure of ratings obtained of actual leaders to those of hypothetical ones (e.g. Edon & Levidon, 1975).

From an external validity standpoint, ignoring the three dimensions we mentioned offers no opportunity to gain information about them; however, ignoring them is preferable to holding them constant because, in any field setting, they will not be constant and will, more than likely, affect ratings. Furthermore, there is no reason that the paradigm could not deal

with them. In particular, the use of video tapes with objective standards could build in time data and also consequences. Behavioral sampling procedures from field settings could assess all three although in a correlational sense even if not in a strict experimental control one. Therefore, the use of true score oriented procedures developed for IPT provides valuable methodological leads for the understanding of the performance appraisal process.

#### Social Cognition

Social cognition is a broad term used to describe research on the cognitive processes involved in social psychological phenomenon, such as person perception (Hamilton, 1979). Most of the methods used in it are borrowed directly from cognitive psychology.

Some key theoretical notions also borrowed from cognitive psychology may help illuminate the field's methodological demands. Most generally, the individual is viewed as an information processor. Cognitive processing is broken down into three components: encoding, representation, and retrieval. Thus, the primary goal of all social cognition research is to study the cognitive processing of social stimuli at one or more of the three major steps in the information processing chain--that is, at the point of information acquisition, (2) of storing that information in memory, and/or (3) of retrieving that information from memory either for simple recall or to act upon the information. It should be apparent that these three steps are exactly the same ones that are needed for appraising the performance of others. Thus, our

problem of understanding performance appraisal can easily be seen in this light (Ilgen & Feldman, 1983).

One of the central assumptions of the social cognition view of information processing is that people's cognitive processes are limited (Taylor & Fiske, 1981). Since individuals cannot possibly handle all bits of information that are available to them, much of the research focuses upon simplification strategies used in processing social cues. One of the most popular constructs for simplification is the use of categories (Rosch, 1975) or "storage bins" (Wyer & Srull, 1979) in which cues are stored and modified in memory. So, for example, if a person is seen as a "typical new recruit" the behaviors of that person may be recalled less in terms of what the person actually did than in terms of what the typical new recruit is expected to have done (See also, Feldman, 1981).

Research methods have been developed to deal with each stage of the three stage process. Of the methods used, those dealing with the first two stages are most interesting to us here. Those dealing with the third stage employ measures of recall and recognition which are standard measures not unique to social cognition and very similar to what has been done in the past with performance appraisal. Therefore, we shall look only at acquisition and storage issues.

Information search and acquisition have been studied almost exclusively in the laboratory by setting up decision tasks requires subjects to view or select information in a way that can be monitored. For example, a matrix of information

might be presented to the subject via an information board, slide projector, or computer. Each piece of information would have a value that remains hidden until the subject selects it. Specific measures might include the content of the information sought, and/or the amount, sequence and duration of search. This technique focuses on external behavior but provides no indication of whether the information acquired is actually being processed (Payne, Braunstein, & Carroll, 1978). A recent study by Matte (1982) used this technique for a performance appraisal task. He adapted the Information Display Boards (IDB) of Jacoby and Chestnut's (Reference Note 2) consumer decision tasks to study the impact of different types of appraised information on appraiser information search strategies. Bersheid, et al. (1976) used a task in which he could tell what information the subject studied information acquisition overtime by monitoring visual monitoring behavior. By measuring eye movements or subject's choices of video tapes to be observed. They felt it was possible to use duration of time watching the task as a surrogate measure of the inherent interest value of the information.

A common method for studying the way information is processed is to use what is called "verbal protocol." In this procedure, subjects are given some task and then asked to describe what they are thinking about as they do it; no information about the hypotheses being tested is given. Verbal information is collected during the task, thereby avoiding problems of memory. Sequential data indicating the contents of processes is produced at the time of working on the task. Thus

arguments that later recall leads to the loss of processing information such as those made by Nisbett and Ross (1980) are irrelevant to the method. However, data coding can be difficult and the external validity of some of the research is questionable (Payne, Braunstein, & Carroll, 1978).

An interesting variation on the verbal protocol research paradigm was adapted to performance appraisal issues by Banks (in press). With a technique she calls the Instantaneous Report of Judgments (IRJ), subjects view taped interviews and report their evaluations while the tape is in progress by pressing buttons on a response board.

With the exception of a few researchers such as Banks (in press) and Matte (1982), most of the social cognition research has been conducted with little or no concern for the specific problems of performance appraisal. As a result, our criteria of dealing with (1) observations over time and interactions in the future, (2) the consequences of behavior, and (3) the interdependency between rater and ratee have, in large part, have been ignored. The exception to this conclusion is time. Given the historical nature of social cognition as a three step, cyclical process of encoding, storage and retrieval from memory, the role of past events has been explored but the role of future states almost totally ignored. Yet the importance of future states is at least implied in the work that shows a difference in the nature of information stored and recalled depending upon the purpose to which the information is to be put. In particular, research has focused on whether later

recall is directed at recalling as much detail as possible or at an accurate general impression. The data indicate that there are differences in the nature of the categories used to store information under these two conditions (Hamilton, et al., 1981). Although the particular issue is not particularly salient for performance appraisal, it does show that people's beliefs about the use to which performance information is to be put may affect the nature of information collected and recalled. When we realize that appraisal information also is used for different purposes (e.g. counseling or administration purposes) this finding does serve as a warning to us.

In spite of the absence of concern for time, consequences and interdependency, there is, in our opinion, no inherent reason why future research could not take these factors into account while still using adaptations of verbal protocol and information search methods. Particularly suited for such modifications would seem to be the IRJ & IDB procedures already applied to performance appraisal by Banks (in press) and Matte (1982) respectively.

One major limitation of social cognition research methods is the almost exclusive reliance upon the laboratory. For the moment we see no alternative to this. Knowledge about the theoretical constructs relevant to performance appraisal processes has not advanced to the point of developing many general laws. For now it would be best to incorporate in the important parameters of time, consequences and interdependency into controlled research using video tapes or other procedures except paper people. Once more specific knowledge is gained

there should be a transition to the field.

#### Conclusion

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from this excursion into the literature and methods of person perception. One overriding conclusion is that it is a literature rich with hypotheses about the performance appraisal process. But, it does not provide much more than hypotheses. For the most part the research was not conducted with performance appraisal in mind. Therefore, many of the important parameters of appraisal settings have been ignored. In particular, most have failed to consider the continuous nature of interactions in performance appraisal (i.e., time), the confounding of behaviors and their consequences, and the interdependencies between appraisers and those being appraised.

In spite of these limitations, several methodologically relevant procedures for understanding performance appraisal were uncovered. Perhaps the most important of these is the use of accuracy as a criterion that was observed in the work on implicit personality theory. Another is the substitution of video or auditory stimuli for the paper people ones. Finally the introduction of multiple observations over time and the analysis of the gathering and storage of information using methods that record information sampling strategies and the subjects' verbal reports of their thoughts at the moment information is being recorded and stored appeared useful. We suggest that future research focus in on the issues particular to performance appraisal and adapt some of the

research strategies described in detail earlier to further our knowledge of how individuals form and describe opinions about the performance of others in work settings.

#### Footnotes

1. A version of this paper was presented as part of a symposium entitled "Methods of Investigating the Rating Process," at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D. C., August, 1982.

#### Reference Notes

1. DeNisi, A. Personal Communication, July 1982.
2. Jacoby, J., Chestnut, R., Weigl, K., & Fisher, W. Pre-purchase information acquisition: Description of a process methodology, research paradigm, and pilot investigation. *Purdue Papers in Consumer Psychology*, paper no. 151, 1975.

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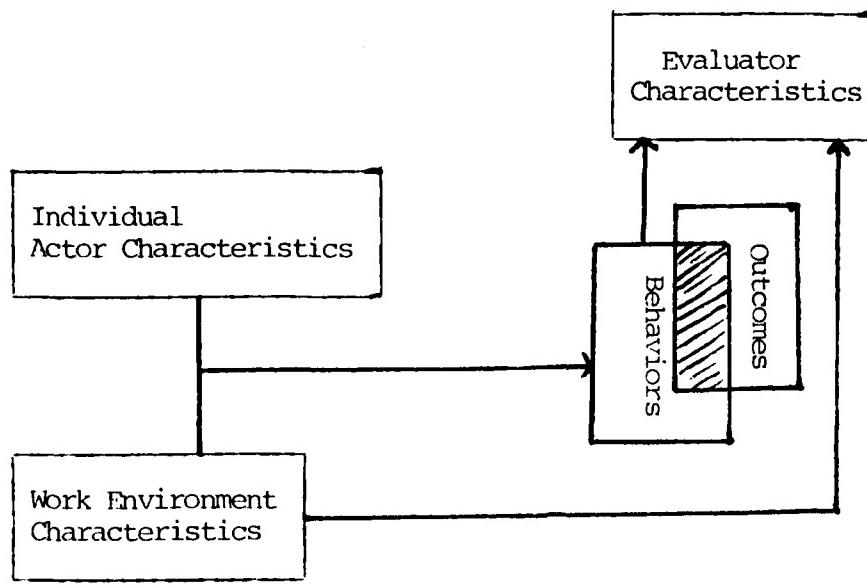
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Figure 1: Conditions of Performance Appraisal



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Defense Technical Information Center  
ATTN: DTIC DDA-2  
Selection and Preliminary Cataloging Section  
Cameron Station  
Alexandria, VA 22314

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Science and Technology Division  
Washington, D.C. 20540

Office of Naval Research  
Code 4420E  
800 N. Quincy Street  
Arlington, VA 22217

Naval Research Laboratory  
Code 2627  
Washington, D.C. 20375

Office of Naval Research  
Director, Technology Programs  
Code 200  
800 N. Quincy Street  
Arlington, VA 22217

LIST 2  
ONR Field

Psychologist  
Office of Naval Research  
Detachment, Pasadena  
1030 East Green Street  
Pasadena, CA 91106

Dr. James Lester  
Office of Naval Research  
Detachment, Boston  
495 Summer Street  
Boston, MA 02219

LIST 3  
OPNAV

Deputy Chief of Naval Operations  
(Manpower, Personnel, and Training)  
Head, Research, Development, and  
Studies Branch (Op-115)  
1812 Arlington Annex  
Washington, D.C. 20350

Chief of Naval Operations  
Head, Nanpower, Personnel,  
Training and Reserves Team  
(Op-964D)  
The Pentagon, 4A478  
Washington, D.C. 20350

Director  
Civilian Personnel Division (OP-14)  
Department of the Navy  
1803 Arlington Annex  
Washington, D.C. 20350

Chief of Naval Operations  
Assistant, Personnel Logistics  
Planning (Op-987H)  
The Pentagon, 5D772  
Washington, D.C. 20350

Deputy Chief of Naval Operations  
(Manpower, Personnel, and Training)  
Director, Human Resource Management  
Plans and Policy Branch (Op-150)  
Department of the Navy  
Washington, D.C. 20350

LIST 4  
NAVMAT & NPRDC

NAVMAT

Program Administrator for Manpower,  
Personnel, and Training

MAT-0722

800 N. Quincy Street  
Arlington, VA 22217

Naval Material Command  
Management Training Center  
NAVMAT 09M32  
Jefferson Plaza, Bldg #2, Rm 150  
1421 Jefferson Davis Highway  
Arlington, VA 20360

Naval Material Command  
MAT-OOK & MAT-OOKB  
OASN(SNL)  
Crystal Plaza #5  
Room 236  
Washington, D.C. 20360

Naval Material Command  
MAT-03  
(J. E. Colvard)  
Crystal Plaza #5  
Room 236  
Washington, D.C. 20360

NPRDC

Commanding Officer  
Naval Personnel R&D Center  
San Diego, CA 92152

Naval Personnel R&D Center  
Dr. Robert Penn  
San Diego, CA 92152

Naval Personnel R&D Center  
Dr. Ed Aiken  
San Diego, CA 92152

Navy Personnel R&D Center  
Washington Liaison Office  
Building 200, 2N  
Washington Navy Yard  
Washington, D.C. 20374

LIST 6  
NAVAL ACADEMY AND NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Naval Postgraduate School  
ATTN: Dr. Richard S. Elster (Code 012)  
Department of Administrative Sciences  
Monterey, CA 93940

Naval Postgraduate School  
ATTN: Professor John Senger  
Operations Research and  
Administrative Science

Superintendent  
Naval Postgraduate School  
Code 1424  
Monterey, CA 93940

Naval Postgraduate School  
Code 54-Aa  
Monterey, CA 93940

Naval Postgraduate School  
ATTN: Dr. Richard A. McGonigal  
Code 54  
Monterey, CA 93940

U.S. Naval Academy  
ATTN: CDR J. M. McGrath  
Department of Leadership and Law  
Annapolis, MD 21402

Professor Carson K. Eoyang  
Naval Postgraduate School, Code 54EG  
Department of Administrative Sciences  
Monterey, CA 93940

Superintendent  
ATTN: Director of Research  
Naval Academy, U.S.  
Annapolis, MD 21402

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Naval Air Station  
Alameda, CA 94591

Officer in Charge  
Human Resource Management Detachment  
Naval Submarine Base New London  
P. O. Box 81  
Groton, CT 06340

Officer in Charge  
Human Resource Management Division  
Naval Air Station  
Mayport, FL 32228

Commanding Officer  
Human Resource Management Center  
Pearl Harbor, HI 96860

Commander in Chief  
Human Resource Management Division  
U.S. Pacific Fleet  
Pearl Harbor, HI 96860

Officer in Charge  
Human Resource Management Detachment  
Naval Base  
Charleston, SC 29408

Commanding Officer  
Human Resource Management School  
Naval Air Station Memphis  
Millington, TN 38054

Human Resource Management School  
Naval Air Station Memphis (96)  
Millington, TN 38054

Commanding Officer  
Human Resource Management Center  
1300 Wilson Boulevard  
Arlington, VA 22209

Commanding Officer  
Human Resource Management Center  
5621-23 Tidewater Drive  
Norfolk, VA 23511

Commander in Chief  
Human Resource Management Division  
U.S. Atlantic Fleet  
Norfolk, VA 23511

Officer in Charge  
Human Resource Management Detachment  
Naval Air Station Whidbey Island  
Oak Harbor, WA 98278

Commanding Officer  
Human Resource Management Center  
Box 23  
FPO New York 09510

Commander in Chief  
Human Resource Management Division  
U.S. Naval Force Europe  
FPO New York 09510

Officer in Charge  
Human Resource Management Detachment  
Box 60  
FPO San Francisco 96651

Officer in Charge  
Human Resource Management Detachment  
COMNAVFORJAPAN  
FPO Seattle 98762

LIST 8  
NAVY MISCELLANEOUS

Naval Military Personnel Command  
HRM Department (NMPC-6)  
Washington, D.C. 20350

LIST 15  
CURRENT CONTRACTORS

Dr. Clayton P. Alderfer  
Yale University  
School of Organization and Management  
New Haven, Connecticut 06520

Dr. Richard D. Arvey  
University of Houston  
Department of Psychology  
Houston, TX 77004

Dr. Stuart W. Cook  
Institute of Behavioral Science #6  
University of Colorado  
Box 482  
Boulder, CO 80309

Dr. L. L. Cummings  
Kellogg Graduate School of Management  
Northwestern University  
Nathaniel Leverone Hall  
Evanston, IL 60201

Dr. Richard Daft  
Texas A&M University  
Department of Management  
College Station, TX 77843

Bruce J. Bueno De Mesquita  
University of Rochester  
Department of Political Science  
Rochester, NY 14627

Dr. Henry Emurian  
The Johns Hopkins University  
School of Medicine  
Department of Psychiatry and  
Behavioral Science  
Baltimore, MD 21205

Dr. Arthur Gerstenfeld  
University Faculty Associates  
710 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02159

Dr. Paul S. Goodman  
Graduate School of Industrial  
Administration  
Carnegie-Mellon University  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Dr. J. Richard Hackman  
School of Organization  
and Management  
Box 1A, Yale University  
New Haven, CT 06520

Dr. Harry Hunt  
College of Business Administration  
Texas Tech. University (Box 4320)  
Lubbock, TX 79409

Dr. Lawrence R. James  
School of Psychology  
Georgia Institute of Technology  
Atlanta, GA 30332

Dr. F. Craig Johnson  
Department of Educational Research  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306

Dr. Allan P. Jones  
University of Houston  
4800 Calhoun  
Houston, TX 77004

Dr. Dan Landis  
Department of Psychology  
Purdue University  
Indianapolis, IN 46205

Dr. Frank J. Landy  
The Pennsylvania State University  
Department of Psychology  
417 Bruce V. Moore Building  
University Park, PA 16802

Dr. Bibb Latane  
The University of North Carolina  
at Chapel Hill  
Manning Hall 026A  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Dr. Edward E. Lawler  
University of Southern California  
Graduate School of Business Administration  
Los Angeles, CA 90007

Dr. Edwin A. Locke  
College of Business and Management  
University of Maryland  
College Park, MD 20742

Dr. Fred Luthans  
Regents Professor of Management  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Lincoln, NE 68588

LIST 15 (CONTINUED)

Dr. R. R. Mackie  
Human Factors Groups  
5775 Dawson Street  
Goleta, CA 93117

Dr. William H. Mobley  
College of Business Administration  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, TX 77843

Dr. Lynn Oppenheim  
Wharton Applied Research Center  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dr. Thomas M. Ostrom  
The Ohio State University  
Department of Psychology  
116E Stadium  
404C West 17th Avenue  
Columbus, OH 43210

Dr. William G. Ouchi  
University of California,  
Los Angeles  
Graduate School of Management  
Los Angeles, CA 90024

Dr. Charles Perrow  
Yale University  
I. S. P. S.  
111 Prospect Avenue  
New Haven, Connecticut 06520

Dr. Irwin G. Sarason  
University of Washington  
Department of Psychology, NI-25  
Seattle, WA 98195

Dr. Benjamin Schneider  
Department of Psychology  
University of Maryland  
College Park, MD 20742

Dr. Edgar H. Schein  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Sloan School of Management  
Cambridge, MA 02139

H. Ned Seelye  
International Resource Development, Inc.  
P. O. Box 721  
La Grange, IL 60525

Dr. H. Wallace Sinaiko  
Program Director, Manpower Research  
and Advisory Services  
Smithsonian Institution  
801 N. Pitt Street, Suite 120  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dr. Richard M. Steers  
Graduate School of Management  
University of Oregon  
Eugene, OR 97403

Dr. Siegfried Streufert  
The Pennsylvania State University  
Department of Behavioral Science  
Milton S. Hershey Medical Center  
Hershey, PA 17033

Dr. James R. Terborg  
University of Oregon West Campus  
Department of Management  
Eugene, OR 97403

Dr. Harry C. Triandis  
Department of Psychology  
University of Illinois  
Champaign, IL 61820

Dr. Howard M. Weiss  
Purdue University  
Department of Psychological Sciences  
West Lafayette, IN 47907

Dr. Philip G. Zimbardo  
Stanford University  
Department of Psychology  
Stanford, CA 94305

Dr. Philip Wexler  
University of Rochester  
Graduate School of Education  
and Human Development  
Rochester, NY 14627

